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ABSTRACT

Volume 4, the fourth of eight publications developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association as part of the "Texas School Dropout Survey Project," focuses on school district research and procedures. It describes a survey of 143 districts with dropout identification procedures conducted to examine those procedures. Findings from 78 districts are reported that revealed that: (1) the majority of districts followed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) guidelines for "improper" and "proper" reasons from dropping out; (2) if a student met other dropout criteria but was no longer of compulsory school age, 68% of the school districts would include him/her in the dropout counts; and (3) 71% of the districts followed a freshman class for 4 years and almost 80% followed a student on a yearly basis to determine the dropout rate. It is concluded that, despite the efforts of the TEA to provide guidelines for dropout identification, districts need a more precise and applicable definition, as well as methodological guidelines. District dropout research conducted in Brownsville, the Tyler Independent School District (ISD), the Ysleta ISD, the McAllen ISD, the Corpus Christi ISD, Santa Gertrudis, the Houston ISD, the Dallas ISD, and the Austin ISD is reviewed, summarized, and conclusions are drawn. Recommendations for dropout definitions and calculation of dropout rates are given. Relevant materials are attached. (NB)

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TEXAS SCHOOL DROPOUT SURVEY PROJECT

VOLUME 4: MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM – SCHOOL DISTRICT RESEARCH AND PROCEDURES

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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Preface

This volume is one of eight publications developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association as part of the Texas School Dropout Survey Project. Seven volumes contain comprehensive reports for each area of study:

Volume 1: Magnitude of the Problem -- Census Analysis

Volume 2: Magnitude of the Problem -- Attrition Analysis

Volume 3: Magnitude of the Problem -- Tracking Study

Volume 4: Magnitude of the Problem -- School District Research and Procedure

Volume 5: Benefit-Cost Impact of the Dropout Problem

Volume 6: Program Responses -- Their Nature and Effectiveness

Volume 7: Study Methods and Procedures

Additionally, a synopsis of findings and implications across all areas of study is included in the report entitled Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the dropout studies conducted by Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) under contract with the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA) in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The major research tasks were designed to examine three primary questions:

(1) What is the magnitude of the dropout problem in the State of Texas?

(2) What is the economic impact of the dropout problem for the State?

(3) What is the nature and effectiveness of in-school and alternative out-of-school programs for dropouts in the State?

The research was conducted during the period of May to October, 1986. Given the paucity of reliable data on dropouts, research methods included primary analyses of data collected by IDRA and secondary analyses of available databases including Fall Survey and Annual Performance Report information collected by TEA and census data collected by the U. S. Bureau of the Census. Major findings are listed below.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Magnitude of the Problem

1. The 1985-1986 attrition rate for Texas high schools was 33 percent.

2. One in five Texas young people (nearly half a million) age 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed the twelfth grade in 1980.

3. Three out of ten Texas dropouts -- 152,000 young people--had completed fewer than nine years of schooling when they left school.

4. Approximately 85 percent of Texas dropouts were born in the United States; less than 15 percent were born in a foreign country.

5. Of the nearly half a million Texas dropouts age 16 to 24, somewhat more than half (52 percent) were male.

6. Among females, attrition rates ranged from a low of 26 percent for White females to 43 percent for Hispanic females.

7. Attrition rates differed markedly for the three major racial-ethnic groups in the State: 27 percent for Whites, 34 percent for Blacks and 45 percent for Hispanics.

8. Hispanic youth, age 16 to 19, were twice as likely, and youth, age 20 to 24, nearly three times as likely to have left school prior to the completion of the twelfth grade as their White counterparts.

9. Nearly half of Hispanic dropouts had completed less than ninth grade when they discontinued schooling compared to 18 percent of White and Black dropouts who discontinued schooling before the ninth grade.

10. Black male dropouts were less likely to be employed than either Hispanic or White male dropouts; two in five Black male dropouts, age 16 to 19, in contrast to one in five of Whites and 26 percent of Hispanics in that age group, were not in the labor force.

Dropout Accounting Procedures

11. Thirty-nine percent of Texas school districts have a system for identifying dropouts.

12. The majority of districts follow similar but not identical forms of the TEA dropout definition.

13. Sixty-two percent of districts do not use a dropout formula for calculating their dropout rate; among districts who have a formula, 9 percent use Average Daily Attendance while 24 percent use Average Daily Membership as the base figure.

14. Only 3.5 percent of districts have conducted some form of dropout research with only nine districts conducting formal research studies on dropouts.

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Statewide Tracking Survey

15. Sixteen percent of the students tracked who were presumed dropouts had not dropped out of school.

16. Twenty-eight percent of the students tracked were employed; of these, most worked at labor intensive, minimum wage jobs.

17. The majority of the students tracked left school because of poor grades, marriage/pregnancy, or financial problems.

Available Dropout Programs

18. Approximately 12 percent of Texas school districts reported having a dropout program; the number of programs reported by colleges, service delivery areas and other agencies was not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

19. Approximately 89 percent of dropout programs in Texas reported having no evaluation data.

Economic Impact

20. The dropout problem is costing the State $17.12 billion in (a) foregone income and lost tax revenues, and (b) increased costs in welfare, crime and incarceration, unemployment insurance and placement, and adult training and education (for each cohort of dropouts). Every dollar invested in educating potential dropouts is estimated to result in a return of nine dollars.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

1. There is a need to develop and use a standardized dropout definition with explicit identification procedures.

Findings from the district dropout identification and procedures surveys, the dropout research reviews, and the student tracking surveys point to a need for a standardized, uniformly-applied dropout definition with necessary identification procedures. Only 39 percent of districts reported having a system for identifying dropouts. Among these districts, definitions were similar but not uniform. The lack of standard definitions effectively precludes aggregating individual district data across school systems and, in some cases, even prevents aggregating data across campuses within a particular school system.

Any definition and identification procedure at the State level must accommodate contextual variables at the district level and also be rigorous enough to result in reliable aggregation across districts. In addition, the definition must be sensitive to such issues as summer versus school-term withdrawals, non-attenders often carried on membership rolls, verifiable transfer procedures and completion of graduation requirements.

State efforts at standardizing dropout identification procedures were initiated in the TEA 1985 Annual Performance Report requirements. Dropout reporting requirements for 1986 focus on a districtwide base figure for grades 7-12. Student identification and tracking procedures are also being put in place with the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) being developed by TEA. Both of these efforts can serve as a springboard for further standardization.

2. There is a need to develop standard procedures for calculating the dropout rate.

As a corollary to the development of a standard dropout definition, calculation procedures must be standardized and clearly specified. IDRA research findings indicate that 62 percent of districts do not use a formula for calculating the dropout rate, despite current reporting requirements developed for local use.

Critical manipulable factors involved in the calculation of dropout rates include: (a) the time frame during which the number of students is counted, e.g, annual versus longitudinal, (b) the range of grade levels included in the dropout rate calculation i.e., the greater the grade span, the lower the dropout rate, and (c) the student accounting procedures used by the district, e.g. average daily attendance versus average daily membership.

While calculations of district dropout rates must remain useful at the local level, State level rates must be used to guide policy deliberations and monitor the effects of State and local intervention strategies.

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3. There is a need to develop a centralized and standardized system for collection of dropout data.

The extensive variability in district dropout definitions and calculations noted above makes comparability across districts difficult at best. Even with standardization, however, it will become important to develop and maintain a centralized means of aggregating and analyzing dropout data across districts. With a centralized data base, the overall effect of intervention strategies as well as the effect of these efforts on particular populations can be monitored.

4. There is a need to develop tracking mechanisms which will increase the reliability of dropout counts and will result in more appropriate program interventions.

Research findings clearly indicate that current communication between and within districts does not facilitate tracking of students who withdraw from a particular school. Approximately 16 percent of the presumed dropouts tracked across the State by telephone or mail reported having never dropped out of school but either transferred or were still enrolled. Within districts, procedures for tracking of students are varied and depend, in part, on district size and resources. Across districts, standard recordkeeping and transfer documentation and follow-up procedures for student withdrawals would greatly facilitate tracking of students as they move from one district to another.

The Migrant Student Record and Transfer System (MSRTS) is the only national longstanding system for tracking of students. The centralization of achievement and other data at a single location currently required by the MSRTS might be circumvented through the use of a computer bulletin board concept with subsequent transfer of records remaining at the district to district level. Whatever the configuration of a feasible tracking system, it is imperative that tracking mechanisms be identified which will enhance monitoring of progress in addressing the dropout problem.

5. There is a need for early dropout intervention efforts given the large numbers of students who leave before the ninth grade.

IDRA research evidence reveals that three out of ten Texas dropouts had completed fewer than nine years of schooling. Among Hispanic dropouts, almost half had discontinued schooling before completing the ninth grade. Reviews of existing dropout prevention programs in Texas revealed that few focus on pre- high school students. If dropout prevention efforts are to effectively impact at-risk populations, prevention efforts must begin at earlier levels. In doing so, strategies must be program-focused and avoid merely labeling and stigmatizing students at earlier grades.

6. There is a need for developing and replicating model dropout prevention and recovery programs for particular types of high risk groups.

Reviews of available literature and IDRA findings related to existing State programs indicated that information on "what works" is generally fragmented. While some exemplary or model programs are in operation across the country and in the State, there is little systematic and generalizable information which would permit program replication. It is, therefore, important to develop and replicate prototypic programs which have the components which are known to be successful: teaching of basic skills, survival skills training, work/study programs, individualized instruction, strengthened guidance and counseling, highly committed and caring teachers with high expectations for their students, and community/parent/business liaisons.

7. There is a need to expand the pool of available dropout prevention and recovery programs in order to service the large and diverse dropout population in the State.

Research on existing dropout programs in Texas revealed that the number currently in operation is inadequate when contrasted with the magnitude of the dropout problem in the State. There is a dearth of formal, structured programs specifically targeted at dropout or dropout-prone youth both within and outside the State's public school systems. In addition to developing and replicating model programs, successful models and strategies must be incorporated into a substantially larger number of diverse programs which will service diverse needs within the dropout population.

In order to serve the diverse migrant

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population, for example, a Graduation Enhancement Model is being developed by TEA and the Texas Migrant Interstate Program. According to data compiled by the Coordinator of the Program, migrant dropout rates are estimated to be in the 60 to 90 percent range. It is obvious, then, that more and varied programs are needed.

8. There is a need to develop systematic approaches to the evaluation of dropout prevention and recovery efforts.

The survey of dropout prevention and recovery programs indicated that 89 percent had no evaluation data . In the absence of such data, conclusions about program effectiveness are not possible. In developing guidelines and standards for evaluation, it is important to ensure that evaluation designs serve to identify programs that work for particular types of participants in particular types of situations. Strategies and results in a prevention program may differ from strategies and results in a recovery effort. Success in a prevention program for non-migrant students may differ from that for migrant students. The enormity of the dropout problem leads to the inevitable conclusion that all students do not leave school for the same or similar reasons or under the same or similar conditions. Neither the reasons nor the solutions can be the same. Evaluation designs must be able to generate information about what works, for what target group, and under what conditions.

9. There is a need to develop and link public and private sector initiatives which are proportionate to the massive number of dropouts in the State.

There are on-going substantive efforts directed at the dropout issue in the State of Texas. State agencies, including TEA and TDCA, have already begun initiatives designed to address the problem from both a prevention and recovery perspective. Private corporations, including Coca-Cola USA and Southwestern Bell, are sponsoring efforts designed to raise awareness of the issues and to develop program alternatives. Foundation support is also being directed at the dropout problem. The Ford Foundation, for example, has established a national dropout initiative which involves public and private sector collaboratives. Further development of communications networks and other linkages between private and public sector initiatives is central to effective dropout interventions. Coordination is also crucial to maximizing the return on the investment which must be made.

The linkages and networking which are necessary to producing results in the area of school dropouts will be facilitated by working within the concept of the educational pipeline. A focus on the student, as he or she progresses through the pipeline, i.e., kindergarten through public schooling and on to a college education, provides context and continuity. The Dallas County Community College District, for example, has established Adopt-A-School partnerships with area middle schools. College faculty are given release time in order to provide staff development and technical assistance to schools.

10. There is a need to make an investment in dropout prevention and recovery efforts which is commensurate with the magnitude of the problem and its economic impact in the State of Texas.

The number of dropouts for the graduating class of 1985-1986 was estimated to be 86,000. This represents a 33 percent attrition rate for a single group of high school students over a three year period. Over the course of their lifetime, projected losses in tax revenue averaged $58,930 per dropout. The estimated cost of keeping each of these students in school was $3,859 per averted dropout. In addition, the State would have realized a savings of $652 million in social expenditures related to crime, welfare, incarceration and unemployment costs. Every dollar invested in educating potential dropouts will result in a return of nine dollars. An investment in human capital yields substantial short and long term results.

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CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY OF DROPOUTS
Texas Dropout Study

District Dropout Identification and Procedures

In the absence of a centralized state-wide database or a standardized, uniformly-followed dropout definition, there are almost as many dropout definitions as there are school districts.

For this reason, measuring the extent of school dropouts in Texas necessitates several methodological imperatives; measurement and definitional issues must not only be addressed at the State but at the local level as well.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has attempted to address this issue by providing a definition and a formula for computing the dropout rate at each campus (See Attachment 1). Dropout counts were first submitted to the TEA on December 1, 1985 as part of an Annual Performance Report (APR).

In most instances, APRs included only the dropout rates and number of dropouts at each campus. Data such as the number of transfers, graduates, base enrollments, reasons for withdrawal or ethnic group distribution were not submitted by the majority of districts. As a result, how the districts define dropouts and calculate dropout rates is unknown.

One means of eliciting this information was to survey a sample of districts for their dropout identification procedures.

Out of the 657 districts which responded to the initial TEA District Dropout Survey in April, 1986 257 (39%) reported having a system or process for identifying dropouts. Of those, 143 were willing to share further information with the contractors.

A dropout definition and procedures survey was developed,

pre-tested and sent to the 143 districts. Seventy-eight (56%) have responded to date.

The districts were surveyed on whether or not they used the particular reasons for withdrawal, as defined by the TEA; their method for calculating the dropout rate; how often the dropout information is updated and where it is kept, and who has the authority to withdraw a student.

The majority of districts followed the TEA guidelines for "improper" and "proper" reasons for dropping out as defined for APR purposes. Most consider poor or non-attendance, dislike of school, enlistment in the military, economic reasons, employment or work permit, expulsion or suspension, language or communication problems, enrollment in a GED program, low or failing grades, marriage, relocation, being overage (over 18), parental request, quiting school, substance abuse, and summer withdrawal as improper reasons for withdrawing. Over 50% however, consider transferring to a vocational or technical school or transfer problems as proper reasons for withdrawal, contrary to the TEA guidelines.

Proper reasons for withdrawal as defined by the TEA guidelines include pregnancy or delivery, placement in a correctional institution, death, early college enrollment, physical or mental disability, and transfer to a public or non-public school. Sixty-five percent of the districts, however, consider pregnancy or delivery as an improper reason for withdrawal. Other TEA proper reasons for withdrawal which are considered improper by the districts surveyed include placement

in a correctional institution (53%), death (23%), early college enrollment (9%), physical or mental disability (28%), and transfer to a public or non-public school (8%).

If a student meets other dropout criteria but is no longer of compulsory school age, 68% of the school districts would include him/her in the dropout counts.

Districts use various means of determining the dropout rate. Seventy-one percent of the districts follow a freshman class for 4 years and almost 80% follow a student on a yearly basis. Forty-one percent of the districts use the high school grades (9-12) in determining the dropout rate. In addition, 54% use original entries, while only 17% use average daily attendance and 33% use average daily membership. Surprisingly, 62% do not use a dropout formula, per se. Of the 26 districts which provided a formula,11 used completely different formulas. Most divide the total number of dropouts by the average daily membership or the TEA recommended formula while others divide the number of dropouts by the total enrollment or original entries.

On the question of withdrawal authority, 19% of the districts consider a student over 16 to have the authority to withdraw themselves from school; 77% would allow a student over 18 to withdraw; 3% would allow a student of any age to withdraw. Most would allow a parent, guardian (92%), or school official (73%) to withdraw a student. Withdrawal is usually initiated by the principal (65%), the attendance clerk (42%), or the counselor (14%).

Once the dropout information is gathered, it is usually sent to the central administration (80%) at the end of the school year

(24%), and updated at the campus level on a yearly basis (46%).

It is clear from the survey results that despite the efforts of the Texas Education Agency to provide guidelines for dropout identification, districts need a more precise and applicable definition, as well as methodological guidelines. For a definition to be standardized and uniformly applied, it must address the needs of the districts. At present, the districts need a definition and methodology which can be readily applied to their particular context with a minimum amount of interpretation.

Morrow's dropout definition, discussed in the second half of this report addresses these concerns.

Methodological concerns can be addressed at the State level through the establishment of a centralized database, open and frequent communication with the districts and thorough follow-up. At the local level, internal consistency can be addressed with the appointment of one person who will be responsible for dropout identification and tracking. This staff person would be trained at the State level on dropout identification procedures and would have frequent interaction with the State contacts.

By establishing a network of trained, concerned individuals, dropout information can be both consistent and comparable among the districts, thus facilitating future data collection and research. This is imperative if future policy planning is to be relevant and effective.

The present status of district dropout definitions and methodologies has enormous implications for any research endeavors. The extensive intra-and inter-district variability in both definitions and methodologies creates problems in data

collection, analysis, and interpretation/generalizability of data.

To fully assess the status of district research, those districts which reported having conducted research in the TEA District Dropout Survey were contacted for copies of any dropout research reports and/or findings.

Review of District Dropout Research

Supplemental Task 1. to conduct a meta-analysis of school district dropout documentation.

As described in the scope of work statement, IDRA proposed to conduct a meta-analysis of Texas school district dropout rates based on research studies conducted to data. In order to collect and analyze school district dropout results, the organization, in cooperation with the State Education Agency, conducted a survey on the availability of dropout related research involving all local school systems in Texas, as well as the State's twenty Regional Education Service Centers (see Attachment 4). In the survey document, districts were asked to indicate whether the district had conducted any research studies in the area of dropouts. Those responding affirmatively were in turn asked to submit copies of their research studies/reports to the state Agency. Of the 1,079 school systems and twenty regional education service centers surveyed, 79 indicated that they had conducted some type of research related to dropouts. Of this number, 38 indicated a willingness to share their research reports with the contractor. Given that only four districts submitted copies of their research documents with the survey forms returned to the Agency, IDRA staff conducted a telephone survey of all of the school districts who had indicated that they had conducted dropout research. During the telephone survey IDRA staff asked each district's designated contact person to:

(1) verify that dropout related research had been conducted,

(2) to briefly describe the nature of the research activities conducted, and

(3) to submit copies of the research reports for our subsequent analysis.

Results of the telephone surveys revealed that of the thirty-three districts contact regarding their dropout research efforts, four were essentially referring to the dropout calculations performed in response to the State's Annual Performance Report requirements, ten indicated that the research conducted was "informal" with no report describing methodology or findings developed, a third cluster indicated that the research effort had not yielded sufficient data for analysis. The remaining 9 school districts submitted copies of the research studies conducted to date. Districts submitting local research documents included Houston, Dallas, Austin, McAllen, Ysleta, Tyler Santa Gertrudis, and Brownsville Independent School Districts. In addition, a research study conducted on dropouts from Nueces County School systems was submitted by Corpus Christi and included in our analysis.

Methodology

In order to develop an analytical framework each of the studies submitted by the school districts was reviewed and subsequently categorized on the basis of its primary focus.

Based on our review, the major research categories which emerged included:

(1) research primarily directed at calculating a dropout rate for individual [or a collection of] school systems; and

(2) research studies of dropout populations for purposes of (1) developing dropout profiles (2) identifying causal factors contributing to pupils' decision to leave school prior to graduation and/or

(3) assessing dropouts' current status and education/job related needs.

Although research involving following-up of dropouts is useful for the development of causal or dropout prevention models, it does not yield data which contributes to the generation of estimates of district dropout rates. These types of studies however, do contribute to the development of intervention strategies and thus are reviewed in detail in a separate study focusing on student tracking and related issues.

Research focusing on dropout rates varied significantly from district to district, and in some districts from year to year in which dropout research was conducted. The development of a valid meta-analysis of these findings was deemed inappropriate. Due to: (1) significant variances in the manner in which dropouts were defined in each school

system; (2) the differences in the methodological approaches utilized, ie. one year versus longitudinal studies; (3) great variances in the levels of sophistication of the research; and, (4) the relatively small percentage of districts in which dropout calculation research had been conducted. Given the available data, a descriptive analysis of the research reports, including description of study methodology and major findings was conducted and considered useful in the development of statewide dropout indices.

Synopses of major studies acquired and reviewed are provided in the ensuing segments of this document.

Brownsville ISD's Dropout Research Efforts.

The Brownsville Independent School District has an enrollment of approximately 50,000 students and is located in the southernmost tip of the state. A border area community, Brownsville school enrollment is principally Hispanic, with a portion of its population consisting of recent immigrants from Mexico. A fast growing school system, Brownsville has experienced annual growth rate in excess of 5 percent a year over the last ten year period.

As a follow-up to district initiatives focusing on the student dropout issue, Brownsville ISD developed a procedure designated to generate an estimate of the dropout rate for the district, and to collect data on the reasons these students were deciding to terminate their schooling before graduation. Using the Texas Education Agency's definition for dropouts (see Attachment 1) prescribed for the tabulation of district dropout data reported in the State mandated Annual Performance Report (APR), Brownsville staff developed a student dropout tracking system in Fall 1985. In the study, data regarding previous years' enrollees were collected and compared to the student rosters for the preceding school year. After eliminating pupils who were considered withdrawals for proper reasons (using the TEA definitions of proper withdrawals), the district calculated the total dropout rate for each grade level, for junior and high school enrollments, as well as a district-wide dropout rate. Dropout rates were also generated by gender. A summary of the districts' dropout statistics is provided on Table 1. Review of these data reveals that the district

TABLE I

CALCULATION OF ANNUAL DROPOUT RATE

FORMULA	Lee	JT	District
TOTAL 1984-85 STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR 1985-86			
A. Total campus membership in beginning of year - 9/1/84	2483	2066	
B. Number transferring to campus during 1984-85	194	183	
C. Number transferred from campus or withdrawn for other proper reasons during 1984-85	239	204	
D. Total base campus enrollment	2438	2045	4483
E. Number graduated, promoted, or obtaining certificate of completion	549	383	
F. Total 1984-85 students eligible for 1985-86	1889	1662	
TOTAL 1984-85 STUDENTS IN CAMPUS FOR 1985-86			
G. Total campus membership in beginning of year - 9/1/85	2579	2122	
H. New students to campus in 1985-86	976	793	
I. Total 1984-85 students in campus for 1985-86	1603	1329	
TOTAL 1984-85 DROPOUTS			
J. Total 1984-85 students eligible for 1985-86 (F)	1889	1662	
K. Total 1984-85 students in campus for 1985-86 (I)	1603	1329	
L. Total 1984-85 total dropouts/students not returning to campus in 1985-86	286	333	619
DROP RATE			
M. Drop Rate The percent that total Dropouts (L) comprise of total 1984-85 base campus enrollment (D) [(L) / (D)] * 100 rounded to one decimal place	11.7	16.28	13.8

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reported an annual (1985-86) dropout rate of 13.3 percent at the secondary level and 3.9 percent at its junior high school campuses.

In related research, the district compiled and analyzed a data set focusing exclusively on students who withdrew from school and reasons for their withdrawal (See Attachment 2). Most noteworthy among the findings was the observation that in over 45 percent of the cases reviewed, students' status was categorized as "moved", "whereabouts unknown", or "left between semesters" [Fall to Spring or Spring to subsequent Fall], whereabouts unknown. This reported difficulty in verifying presumed dropout status was found in most of the research which was analyzed and will be addressed in more detail in latter sections of this document.

Tyler ISD

The Tyler Independent School District is located in East Texas and has a student enrollment of approximately 15,000 students. With a student population of White, Black and a small percentage of Hispanic pupils it has enjoyed a relatively stable enrollment pattern for the last six years. In a study of high school dropouts conducted in 1985, the district office of Personnel and Research initiated an eight year longitudinal study examining data for the preceding 4 school years (1981-82 through 1984-85), and plans on monitoring student enrollments for the subsequent four year period. The research study analyzed marked the completion of the analysis of 1984-85 high school data, and included an analysis of statistics from the past four years, beginning

with the 1981-82 school year and ending with the 1984-85 school year.

In describing their research methodology, Tyler staff indicate that the initial step involved the definition of the term "dropout". As in the Brownsville study, the definition used followed the criteria disseminated by the State Education Agency and used to formulate dropout rates reported in the State-mandated district Annual Performance Report. According to the Tyler report, the study was initiated with the identification of students withdrawn for improper reasons [as per the TEA definition] and involved a review of student withdrawal records. Withdrawals for purposes of transfering to other educational institutions required review of student records for evidence of such enrollment [ie, transcript requests], with cases reflecting no evidence of subsequent enrollment classified as dropouts. "Summer leavers," ie. students enrolled in the preceding school year but not returning in the subsequent year were among the most difficult to identify, with data for said group only compiled for the last year (1984-85), included in the four year analysis of previous years records.

Using the TEA definition and their formula prescribed for computing an annual dropout rate, the district calculated dropout rates for the 1984-85 school year. Using the methodology cited, the study reports a dropout rate for each of the high school campuses, as well as a district total rate, (See Table 2). In addition to calculating a dropout rate based on state APR approaches, the Tyler school district calculated dropout rates for the four year period

spanning the 1985-86 to 1984-85 school years. Due to the lack of summer dropout data for all years included in this analysis, summer dropouts were excluded from 1984-85 data to allow comparisons across years. Data were tabulated by grade level and by campus for each year, as well as for the total district [grades 9-12 inclusive]. Dropout rates for the district for each year included in the study are presented on Table 2.

In addition to tabulating data by grade and campus, the research also developed breakdowns by sex for each year as well as comparative data on dropouts by ethnic groups. No significant difference was found in the analysis of male vs. female dropout rates, while racial ethnic dropout rates were described as "revealing balance and consistent when compared with enrollment by population for the years examined in the study," although data regarding ethnic/racial enrollments is not presented to verify this observation.

In a final segment of the report, reasons for student's dropping out are summarized based on withdrawal forms data collected by district staff. According to the withdrawal report, approximately 45 percent of the withdrawals were classifed as "withdrew, no evidence of re-entry" or, "unable to locate", a rate comparable to that found in research conducted in other school systems. Major reasons for withdrawals for those students on whom data were available included poor attendance (23 percent), underachievement (10 percent), economic (7.7 percent), and marriage (6 percent).

TABLE 2

TYLER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS BY GRADE *

	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Ninth	127	9.2	117	8.7	109	7.5	104	6.6
Tenth	138	10.9	123	9.3	84	6.5	122	9.4
Eleventh	106	9.1	129	11.7	91	7.0	118	9.8
Twelfth	104	9.5	86	8.1	55	5.5	56	5.5
TOTALS	475	9.7	455	9.4	339	6.9	400	7.9

* Summer dropouts not included

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Future replications of the study are planned to provide a data base for monitoring the impact of reform measures on high school students enrolled in the district.

Ysleta ISD

Ysleta Independent School district has an enrollment of approximately 43,000 pupils. Located in the El Paso area, the school system is one of the eight largest school systems in the State, with a predominantly Hispanic student enrollment. The district's interest in addressing the student dropout issue culminated in the development of a study of the status of a sample of 300 students presumed to have dropped out of school during the 1984-85 school year.

Identification of presumed dropout was accomplished by junior high school and high school staff reviews of student enrollment rosters. Students pre-registering in 8th grade in 1983-84 were tracked to high school rosters of 9th grade pupils enrolling in the subsequent (1984-85) school year. After reviews of initial dropout rosters by counseling personnel and purging of student names based on confirmed enrollment, 1,184 pupils were identified as presumed dropouts. A random sample of pupils produced a 300 student subset which was contacted by volunteers who performed a telephone survey of student status. Of the 300 student sample, 53 percent, slightly greater than one half of the total sample were not contacted due to the students' having moved, wrong numbers, and in a few isolated cases, unwillingness to participate in the survey. Among the 47 percent contacted, 20 percent reported that they were still enrolled in junior high

school, with many having lacked sufficient credits to permit them to register for 9th grade classes. Of the remaining 27 percent of the sample, 13 percent were still enrolled but attending schools outside of Ysleta ISD. Three other students revealed that they had completed GED programs and were enrolled in college. According to the survey only 42 of the 300 pupils sampled were confirmed dropouts (although the status of 53 percent of these sampled was not determined).

Having identified the small pool of actual dropouts the school district conducted telephone surveys of students' reasons for leaving school, interest in continuing education, participatory levels in extra curricular activities, and employment status. Primary reasons for dropping out included "school was not for me", marriage/pregnancy, poor grades, need for jobs, or conflicts with teachers. Ten of 42 students surveyed, or 21 percent reported having jobs. Forty-five percent (45 percent) expressed some interest in continuing their education. When asked about levels of participation in extra curricular activities while in school (sports, clubs) 68 percent reported no sports participation, while 82 percent reported no clubs(s) participation.

Using data compiled in the study, the Ysleta school system initiated a comprehensive dropout reduction effort, inviting the dropout pool identified to re-enroll during special pre-registration periods established for that purpose. For the 83 pupils who did re-enroll, the district initiated a monitoring system, and special assistance from the coordinator of guidance and counseling and campus-based personnel. The study also generated a set of

recommendations for addressing the dropout issue; included were such areas as ongoing counseling for students referred to through in-school suspension, expansion of ongoing community involvement programs, tutoring and counseling at the elementary school level, block scheduling, advisory periods, intermurals, and team staffing at the middle school level.

McAllen ISD

Located in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, McAllen ISD has a student enrollment of approximately 17,200 pupils, the great majority being Hispanic. Since 1980-81 the district has been experiencing a steady growth in its student population, increasing by 15 percent in the five year period beginning in 1980-81. Concerned with the perceived high dropout rates experienced in many South Texas school systems, the school district commissioned a study by two professors. Dr. David Alvirez and Dr. Manuel M. Lopez, to (1) discover differences in the performance patterns of dropouts and non-dropouts, (2) to identify major factors responsible for student's decision to drop out, and (3) to develop a set of empirically-based recommendations to help alleviate the dropout problem.

Conducted in 1985-86, the study utilized a multi-faceted approach involving student records' analyses, interviews with students and parents, and surveys of administrators and support personnel as well as teachers.

The students sampled included three subgroups: students on academic or college preparatory curricular tracks,

students in the general, i.e., regular curricular track and, students identified as dropouts by a review of school district files.

Subsamples of parents of students from the three student groups were selected for the parent interview segments of the study. The sample of school administrators and support personnel included all such personnel in McAllen ISD. The teacher sample was drawn using stratified proportional sampling techniques to ensure representativeness of respondents.

Student records' analyses included a review of student grades, achievement levels, disciplinary action, late entry or exit from school, dating back to the students' elementary school years.

Interview data included student demographics; i.e, age, sex, language, etc., attitudes toward self, peers, teachers, support personnel, and administrators; reasons for dropping out, and current education/employment status.

Parent interviews included parent demographics including age, country of origin, educational attainment, occupation, language, and other variables considered relevant to the topic under investigation. Additionally, parents' attitudes toward the student, and school personnel were solicited in order to contrast student, parent, and school personnel perceptions of similar issues.

Teachers, administrators and support personnel surveys focused on similar areas in order to capture and contrast school personnel perceptions of causes for student dropouts, and the roles played by parents, schools and students in the dropout process.

Among the studies' major findings (taken from the report) were:

(1) students at risk of dropping out are identifiable as early as the first and second grade. Critical variables include ethnic composition of school attended, conduct grades, subject grades, absenteeism, late/entry/ early exit, and achievement test scores;

(2) conventional dropout characteristics did not prove to be sufficient to distinguish between the high risk student who dropped out and comparable students who stayed through graduation [suggesting the presence of unique interactive factors which offset the impact of these variables];

(3) while parents and teachers perceived themselves as supportive and as encouraging pupils to stay in school, dropout students felt lack of teacher and school personnel support;

(4) both parents and teachers felt that parents lack of education/limited English proficiency precluded

them from effectively helping their children with homework;

(5) student dropouts and their parents were more likely to feel estranged from the school, with parents feeling more estranged then students;

(6) perceptions of teachers and academic support personnel and those of parents and students were dichotomized: students and parents were most likely to blame the school system and school environment for a student's decision to drop out while school personnel tended to blame students' parents and home environments for students' performance leading to dropping out; differences were most pronounced between dropouts and school personnel;

(7) in the case of dropouts, parent-school personnel interactions tended to occur in adversarial settings.

Major recommendations incorporated into the study included:

- expansion of community involvement efforts already initiated by the school district;

- establishment of more effective communication strategies with parents of limited English proficiency students;

- provision of service training for teachers support personnel and administrators regarding needs of high risk/Mexican American students;

- improvement of student-teacher communication;

- centralization of recordkeeping to facilitate monitoring and early intervention;

- implementation of preventive programs at elementary levels, incorporating strong evaluation components to monitor program effectiveness;

- expansion of existing counseling services;

- greater utilization of social work professionals;

- provision of cooperative education programs to meet financially-related needs of certain high risk pupils;

- conducting additional research in such areas as causes of student alienation, and transient student issues.

Corpus Christi ISD

Corpus Christi ISD is the largest of the 13 school systems located in Nueces County, with an enrollment of approximately 36,000 students.

Research on Corpus Christi are dropout students was conducted by Dr. Tito Guerrero and Ronald Howard in a 1986 study entitled "Youth Dropout Research Project". Participating school systems included Corpus Christi, Agua Dulce, Banquete, Bishop Calallen, Flour Bluff, Lando, Santa Cruz, Tuloso, Midway, West Oso, Driscoll, Port Aransas, and Robstown. Major purposes of the project were to (1) assist in describing the characteristics of dropouts in Nueces County and (2) improving the quality and level of services to at-risk youth. Sponsored by the City of Corpus Christi, as administrative agency for the Corpus Christi/Nueces County services Delivery area (CCNC-SDA), the research included: (1) survey of dropouts in the county, (2) publication of an inventory of information and referral sources for dropouts, (3) development of an information and referral system to facilitate monitoring of dropouts in Nueces County, and (4) development of a 5 year projection of prospective dropouts in the county.

As described in the final report, the purposes of the research project include: (1) collection of data that would assist in the creation and/or improvement of services to at-risk youth and (2) creation of an information and referral system that would enhance communication between Nueces County School Systems and the Corpus Christi/Nueces

County SDA in monitoring school dropouts. A second purpose involved developing intervention strategies to equip dropouts with necessary job skills and/or facilitate their return to school, and for those not re-enrolling, to facilitate acquisition of an education equivalent to that obtained by high school graduates.

For purposes of this project, this review focused on that aspect of the research involving the identification and follow-up of school dropouts in Nueces County.

Project Methodology

According to the research document, the research identified a poll of dropouts referred by the Nueces County school systems participating in the study. From the pool of dropouts identified by participating school systems, the research staff selected a random sample of 200. Students were contacted by telephone to schedule individual interviews. Interviewers were carefully screened by research staff, and provided a one-day training session regarding interview procedures and content covered by the project's interview instruments. Results of the interviews were submitted to the research staff who assumed responsibility for data reduction and analysis.

Major Findings

As noted in the research report, the relatively high mobility of the target group significantly impacted the contact rates experienced in the study; of the 300 included

in the original sample, 39 percent [117] completed interviews. In conducting the research, some redundancy [inclusion of the same students in two or more district listing] was discovered. Accuracy of telephone numbers provided was also a problem for a significant number of cases.

Analyses of survey results indicate that Hispanic students dropped out at significantly greater rates than Blacks and Anglos, with Hispanics and Blacks tending to leave school earlier than Anglos. According to the interview results, minority dropouts are more likely to receive government assistance than non-minority, with a higher preponderance evidenced among minority females. Among dropouts, over 75 percent live with their parents. As a group, Hispanic dropouts reported the highest incidence (20 percent) of dependent children.

When queried regrading reasons for dropping out, students cited personal/family reasons as the major factor. Among junior high school students disciplining related problems were the reasons most often cited for leaving school. Questions involving self-ratings of literacy reflected that Hispanic pupils were more likely to acknowledge difficulty in performing such tasks as reading a newspaper, etc. On questions related to unemployment rates, the highest rates were found among Black dropouts. Employment persistence, defined as staying at the same job one or more years, was extremely low below 10 percent and among those employed, job satisfaction was low. A great majority of students contacted indicated a need for some

type of job training. Lack of clear employment goals/objectives among sample students suggest a need for career counseling for dropouts as well as at-risk pupils in general.

Major recommendations resulting from the study included:

(1) development of an information and referral system to facilitate communication among Corpus Christi Nueces County Consortium in order to identify and monitor dropouts;

(2) distribution of findings to district's counseling personnel to facilitate planning of within school interventions;

(3) modifying existing job training programs to integrate more direct interaction with families of dropouts;

(4) increasing visibility of the local area Job Training Program via use of more public announcements and direct advertising.

Five year dropout projection

In a separate research initiative, the Corpus Christi Area study also developed a methodology to enable the researchers to formulate estimates of prospective dropouts for Nueces County over the next five year period, i.e,

beginning with the 1985-86 school years. The approach utilized included the compilation of estimates of total county population for the ensuing five year period, and calculation of project school enrollments based on previous years' ratio of city population to count school enrollments. After deriving estimates of total enrollments the study generated estimates of secondary level student populations (Using TEA directory school/enrollment data figures for preceding years as the basis for the developing initial rations, and then applying those ratios to future population projections). Results of these analyses resulted in projections of secondary dropouts rates of 4.3 percent to 5.7 percent for the period spanning 1985-86 to 1989-90. Projections reflected a 45 percent increase in dropouts during the five year period involved, with rates escalating in the initial years and decreasing somewhat in the latter years.

Santa Gertrudis

Santa Gertrudis is a small rural school system located outside of Kingsville, Texas. Its 1985-86 enrollment was approximately 80 students, a decrease of 25 percent from its 1978-80 level. Dropout research was initiated in the school system in 1984 with the formal collection of dropout related information conducted by the high school staff.

Review of the district's research methodology reflects that the district used a longitudinal approach, tracking the status of two cohort groups. These include the 1972 and 1973 kindergarten enrollees who were subsequently tracked

through their respective graduation years in 1985 for the 1972 class, and 1986 for the 1973 kindergarten students.

According to data summarized in the school districts' data sheets, of 8 students enrolled in the 1973 kindergarten cohort, five graduated while the remaining three students "completed the 11th grade", a dropout rate of 37 percent. The 1973 kindergarten group included 16 students. Of this number 3 had graduated, 5 had been retained and were still enrolled while the remaining 8 pupils had discontinued their education at some point between the eight and eleventh grade.

In addition to reporting its students dropout information, the district also compiled and analyzed achievement test data for ninth and tenth grade students. Data presented included achievement test results for tenth grade pupils tracked over a six year period (1981-86) as well as TEAMS performance data for its 1986 freshman class.

District activities developed in response to the research findings are described in the cover letter accompanying the data summaries, and include ongoing monitoring of TEAMS test performance, development of guidance plans, and parent training in such areas as study skills, school policies and TEAMS.

Although the district studies reviewed thus far reflect some variance in focus, complexity, or basic methodology, each represents the extent of research conducted at the local district level in each of these locales. In contrast

to the efforts conducted by the Austin, Houston, and Dallas Independent School systems reflect an ongoing process spanning as many as ten years. Additionally, the research conducted within these major systems has ranged from development of estimates of annual as well as longitudinal dropout estimates, tracking and interviewing of presumed dropouts, and in some cases development of causal models and related intervention strategies designed to address the dropout issue. Given the larger research staff and budgets characteristic of large urban school systems, the sophistication and extent of research efforts conducted was anticipated. The following sections of the report summarize the research efforts conducted by these school systems.

Houston ISD Dropout Research

The Houston Independent School District's dropout studies reviewed include a series of five separate reports developed during the period spanning. April to September 1985 by the district's Department of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. the first document in the series (dated June, 1985) comprehensively addresses "Issues In Defining and Enumerating Dropouts". The research document first summarizes the state of dropouts' research, briefly discussing the extent of the problem, and causes of dropping out as described in the research literature. The subsequent section provides a background history of dropout research conducted by the Houston school district and citing the creation of a Task Force on Dropouts in 1982.

The document proceeds to discuss the extensive differences in the way school systems define dropouts, proposing that "there are as many definitions of the terms as there are people dealing with the problem". The Houston district's definition is then presented as "a pupil who leaves school for any reasons except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies, and without transferring to another school." The report then proceeds to summarize the dropout literature as it related to why students drop out and major characteristics of dropouts.

Having presented the background data, the document details the procedures utilized by the district to calculate a dropout rate. TEA-mandated withdrawal codes recorded in student masterfiles, are reported as the basis for

calculating district dropout rates. Lack of a system for verifying the accuracy of reported withdrawal reasons is noted. Coupled with inadequacies in maintaining and updating district student data files, the adequacy of the existing data base for calculating a dropout rate is questioned.

The document notes that dropout definitions remained consistent between 1978 and 1982. In 1982 the State Education agency revised the definition, reducing the withdrawal codes from 16 to 9 by collapsing some of the explanatory definitions (i.e., employment, underachiever, etc.) into "dropped out of school". Using the new definition, and data compiled on students from 1978-79 to 1983-84, the district tabulated and presented a six-year annual dropout trend. The data reflect that the annual rate ranged from 5.3 percent to 6.5 percent, with minimal variance observed across ethnic groups. Dropout rates were calculated using K-12 enrollment divided by the number of withdrawals reported for each respective year.

After presenting the six year trend data, alternative approaches to the calculation of annual and cumulative dropout rates are presented. The document then proceeds to review the literature on dropout prevention/intervention strategies and presents a summary of a meeting with district attendance teachers which focused on the dropout issue. The report culminated in a series of recommendations which included:

(1) revision of the dropout definition;

(2) documentation of transcript request;

(3) compilation of an annual report system as described in the report;

(4) revision and clarification of TEA-mandated codes;

(5) that district staff be used to determine status or whereabouts of unknown students;

(6) that the research department produce a comprehensive analysis of existing dropout

programs (HISD and elsewhere) for use in planning local intervention strategies.

"Dropout Report #2 "Calculating HISD Dropout Rates: An Alternative to Existing Procedures".

This is the second report in the district dropout research series. In the April 1985 research report the district staff examines existing district methodology for calculating the local dropout rate. The first step in the process is described as development of a definition of what constitutes a dropout in HISD, defined was withdrawals reported by campus personnel, using TEA's mandated withdrawal categories. The second step involves establishing a beginning and ending date for which the rate will be established in order to generate an estimated net enrollment. The dropout rate is defined as the ratio resulting from

dividing estimated dropouts by the net enrollment for the time span being examined.

Determination of presumed dropouts varied by definition used. Pre-1982 reports included all students leaving school prior to graduation except for (1) death 92) transfer to other schools or (3) early college admission. Concern was cited over exclusion of students leaving/not returning after summer, and lack of provision in existing methodology to account for such students. In order to adjust for summer leavers, and students transferring into and out of campuses during the school year, research staff recommended revising existing calculations by utilizing a formula which adjusted beginning year figures by subtracting (a) summer leavers, (b) the difference between incoming and outgoing transfer students, and (c) the presumed dropouts. The adjusted base year figure (plus dropouts and summer leavers) is then divided by the estimated summer leavers plus reported dropouts, to arrive at an estimated dropout rate for the year.

In order to assess the effects of this variation in the methodology on reported dropout rates, district staff pilot-tested the approach using a cohort of tenth grade pupils. The pilot group was tracked to the subsequent school year. Lists of students were then generated and compared. Summer leavers, students transferring in to and out of the district (for the grade involved) were identified, and subsequent adjustments made to estimated dropout rates. Comparison of dropout statistics generated without prescribed adjustments yielded a rate of 9.83 percent for

the campus in which the pilot study was conducted. After the prescribed adjustments, the dropout rates for the tenth grade group from the same campus yielded a 30 percent dropout rate. The research proposes that existing calculation methodology tends to underestimate the magnitude of the problem, and recommends the adoption of the alternative procedure described, with some further refinements. The report also recommended the generation of both annual and cumulative dropout estimates for the district, each school and grade, and by ethnic group beginning with the 1980-81 school year.

Research Report #3 in the Houston ISD dropout research series entitled "HISD's Dropouts, 1983-84 is described as a brief examination of demographic and academic characteristics of those students in grades 6-12 who were assigned withdrawal codes for the school year reference, exclusive of students who drop out during the summer. Using school district withdrawal lists, approximately 6,200 students are identified as 1983-84 dropouts. Withdrawal codes include: dropped out of school, non-attendance, non-compulsory school age, entered verified employment, married/pregnant, court jurisdiction, illness and whereabouts unknown. After listing withdrawal categories the report then, proceeds to present tabular summary data on dropouts by sex, and ethnicity.

Dropout summaries reveal that 57 percent of dropouts are male, 43 percent female; black students account for 38 percent, Hispanic 35 percent, and White pupils 24 percent of

the total dropouts in the year analyzed. Analyses of dropout rates within ethnic groups reflect that 9 percent of Hispanics in grades 6-12 dropped out in 1983-84, while Whites had a 7 percent dropout rate and blacks a 5.6 percent dropout level.

Data presented by grade level reflects that of the 6,200 withdrawals, the percentage by grade levels are as follows:

Grade Level	Percent of Withdrawal Total
6	58.8 percent
7	8.8
8	10.0
9	30.1
10	19.8
11	15.5
12	9.9

The research also profiles student withdrawals by month for the August 1983 through May 1984, inclusive. Review of the data reflects that withdrawal rates are lower in August (.2 percent) September (4.8 percent) and December (7.2 percent) with the remaining months ranging from 10.5 percent in March to 14. percent in January and April. Dropout rates for the other months ranged from 11 to 13 percent. Attempts to calculate dropout rates for LEP students were hampered by questions regarding the accuracy of this data on the students being examined.

Presentation of data by reading achievement levels revealed that 49 percent of student withdrawals had reading achievement scores below the 25th percentile of the black pupils identified as withdrawals 60 percent scored below the 25th percentile and another 28 percent scored between the 25th and 49th percentile. Among the 1,061 Hispanic withdrawals pupils, 52 percent scored the 24th percentile, while another 31 percent had reading achievement scores between the 25th and 49th percentiles. Among white student withdrawals 53 percent scored below the 50th percentile (in contrast to 88 percent for Blacks and 85 percent for Hispanics) suggesting some variance in the dropout profiles among minority and nonminority pupils.

Analyses of withdrawal code data reflects that some of the codes yield little useful information as to reasons why pupils withdraw. These include such categories as"dropped out of school", "other", "whereabouts unknown" and non-compulsory school age account for 85 percent of withdrawals, with the first three accounting for 66.6 percent of this total.

Withdrawal codes analyzed by ethnic group reflect a generally consist pattern consistent with the total group trend; "non-attendance," "other," "whereabouts unknown", and "dropped out" are listed as the primary reasons for all withdrawals.

The study concludes with recommendations for increased accuracy in developing dropout counts to include summer

dropouts, improve recordkeeping, and additional research on why academically capable pupils discontinue their education.

Research Report #4 "Intervention Strategies focuses on dropout demographics, student characteristics, and dropout intervention options".

Following a comprehensive review of dropout-related literature, the report proposes that dropping out is the end-product of a set of complex factors including student, home, school, and societal characteristics. Given this variance in causes, development of intervention and/or prevention strategies necessitate varied approaches, including an emphasis on addressing many of the underlying stresses and problems leading to student decisions to dropping out of school.

Proceeding to a discussion of dropout-related programs, the report distinguishes prevention from recovery efforts. In assessing impact of prevention programs the research notes difficulty in distinguishing at-risk students from prospective dropouts, a factor which has a tendency to overestimate prevention programs' actual holding power.

Citing relatively low recovery rates experienced by post-dropout interventions, HISD research staff notes the continued presence of problems/conditions which caused the dropout situation and the need for recovery programs to ameliorate these issues if recovery efforts are to be effective.

The research study proceeds to review characteristics found in effective dropout programs including an emphasis of making students feel accepted and developing in group, familial type relations, small size projects, improvement of teachers and pupils involved in dropout prevention activities, the need for involvement of students in extra-curricular activities. Discussing intervention strategies, the report cites the need for a predictive formula which considers a multiplicity of student characteristics. Acknowledging the different dropout profiles discovered in the literature, the report correspondingly recommends a range of intervention strategies for different pupils.

Proposing that interventions must go beyond addressing student characteristics, the report proposes consideration of school related issues. These include considerations concern school/class size, rules and regulation regarding grades, and promotion, type and quality of instructional offerings, and teacher and counselor attitudes. Other issues raised include caution against emphasizing less demanding curricula which may be counter productive for students with normal ability and emphasis on instructional strategies where knowledge is mutually achieved rather than received by students. They report that, though computer assisted instruction can be one approach to providing one-on-one support, software-related assumptions regarding students ability to assume responsibility, stay on tasks, and other issues involving timelines and orderliness may not automatically apply to high risk pupils. The report also proposes that dropout preventions require staff development

to insure understanding of and sensitivity to dropout related issues.

Reviewing characteristics found in effective/successful programs in HISD, the report notes that (1) adequate staff and funding (2) sufficient lead time for planning and, (3) adequate duration periods sufficient to test programs effects are essential facets in implementing and measuring the effects of such programs.

Research Report #5 is entitled "Secondary Dropouts Update, 1984-85.

Review of this document revealed a relatively brief presentation of 1984-85 dropouts' statistics for grades 6-12. Repeating methodology used in the 1983-84 dropout analysis research staff tabulated withdrawals recorded on the districts student recordkeeping system and tabulated a variety of summary statistics for the group. As was the case with the 1983-84 analyses, the dropout rates excluded summer dropouts which were not identified in the district withdrawal reporting system.

According to the data, the dropout rate fell from 6,217 to 5,750 from 1983-84 to 1984-85, declining from 6.9 to 6.3 percent during that period. Analyses of dropout rates by six reflect that males accounted for 57 percent of all dropouts. Ethnic group data reflected that Black students constituted 38 percent, Hispanic 37 percent, Whites 23 percent and Asians 2 percent of the dropout population. Compilation of dropout rates within ethnic group revealed

that the 2,100 Hispanic dropouts constituted 8.3 percent of the Hispanic enrollments in grades 6-12. The cohort dropout rates for Blacks was 5.3 percent, while 6.8 percent of White pupils dropped out during the 1984-85 school year. While Black and White pupils reflected a half point decline within group dropout rates, Hispanics continued to exhibit the highest rates, followed by White and then Black pupils. The report concludes with a caution regarding interpretation of the data, re-emphasizing that lack of summer dropouts tends to depress the actual rates which the department considers to be significantly higher.

Research Report #6, "Summer Disappearances, 1984-85".

The sixth study in the Houston dropout series presents the results of activities involving the tracking of students' records from the last day of 1984-85 to the subsequent school year in order to identify students failing to re-enroll in 1984-85, and for whom no information regarding educational status is available. While previous years' dropout formulas considered transfers, and students lost due to death, graduation and other reasons, summer leavers were excluded from the calculation of district dropout rates.

According to data compiled 28,000 pupils, did not re-enroll in HISD in the fall of 1984, after having attended school through the end of the 1983-84 school year. If one assumes all 28,000 summer leavers are dropouts, the district dropout rates increases from 8,400 to 36,400 or from 6.4 percent to 19.5 percent for the 1984-85 school year. If one

assumes that only 33 percent of the summer leavers actually drop out, the dropout rate declines to 10.5 percent. In either case, dropout proportions are notably higher when summer leaver data are integrated into the analyses.

In presenting the summer leaver profile, the research reveals that 11,219 or 39 percent were Black, 8,845 or 31 percent were Hispanic, and 26 percent were White; figures relatively comparable to the school year dropouts reported in earlier analyses. The report concludes with the observation that "accurate accounting of all students who drop out is necessary if we we [the district] are going to be able to measure, with any degree of certainty, the impact of efforts to reduce the dropout rate in HISD".

Research Report #7 "Telephone Survey of HISD Dropouts".

This research documents the results of a joint project between the Houston school district and Literacy Advance of Houston designed to tract the status of 1984-85 HISD student dropouts. Research procedures included the generation of a listing of students recorded as dropouts on the district's student rosters, (including names, addresses, and last known phone numbers) and subsequent telephone contact to assess current student status and determine their interest in/willingness to return to school. Of the 5,000 students listed, a total of 336 were contacted, with 293 considered usable in the analysis. The 336 represents a 6.7 percent contact rate, considered significantly below the level experienced in other student tracking studies. No details regarding the contact tracking procedures, i.e., contact

time frames, number of calls, etc. was provided that might yield factors explaining the low contact rate. Of the 293 students contacted, 24 percent were Black, 60 percent were Hispanics, and 16 percent were White, with Hispanic respondents exceeding the proportion they represented of the 1984-85 dropout class.

It was interesting to note that of the 293 students contacted, 33 percent reported that they were currently enrolled in school; of those who returned 44 percent were Black, 41 percent were White, and 28 percent were Hispanic. On a question regarding current job status, 40 percent of Black respondents reported that they were currently, while 85 percent of Hispanic dropouts were employed, and 89 percent of White student dropouts reported having jobs. Overall 82 percent or 95 of 117 students responding to the employment item reported being employed.

Noting that the district's students withdrawal codes yielded little useful data regarding reasons for students' withdrawals (i.e., non-attendance, dropped out, whereabouts unknown) the surveyors asked students to indicate the actual reason why they had dropped out. For reasons not specified, the majority of respondents volunteered that they "had just dropped out", (possibility reflecting a need for more structured probing in future student contact efforts).

On the item regarding their interest in returning to school, the surveyors experienced a 50 percent response rate, with 90 percent of those answering affirmatively. Only 20 percent however indicated an interest in returning

to an alternative education setting, while only 13 percent (37 of 293) indicating a willingness to return to HISD. Only ten percent of those contacted expressed an interest in tutoring, with most requesting assistance with reading or mathematics.

On a question regarding these students interest in acquiring a GED, only 22 percent responded. Among those responding however, 80 percent indicated a desire to at least a GED certificate. Eleven percent (11 percent) reported that they were already working on acquiring a GED, while two percent (2 percent) of those contacted reported having completed GED requirements.

In a post script to the report, the document indicates that LAH staff had contacted an additional 700 students from the dropout listing. Despite the total 1000 contacts, only 35 of these former students had been provided assistance by the Houston Literacy Advance Program, though many indicated an interest in returning to school to complete their education. The report concludes with the LAH Directors observation that "though it may be difficult to attract many of these [dropout students] back, the contact attempts were meaningful"; that they (the student) would require a tremendous amount of positive reinforcement, and positive human contact to stay and succeed."

Dallas ISD Dropout Research

The Dallas ISD Dropout research spans over a decade of independent but inter-related research activities dating back to the 1970-71 school year. Reflecting an evolutionary process, the dropout research efforts were initiated with simple tabulations of students formally identified as withdrawing from school and evolved into complex, multi-faceted approaches which utilized withdrawal records' analyses, adjustments for summer leavers and integration of nonattender student counts in the determination of the school district dropout rates. In a review of district dropout efforts, the research director summarizes the major facets of each phase of the district's dropout research efforts and presents summaries of the major findings generated by the research activities referenced. This summary is a synopsis of major highlights referenced in that document.

According to the district research staff, the first comprehensive district dropout study was conducted during the 1970-71 school year. That initial effort, however, was limited to the identification and tabulation of students formally withdrawing from school as reflected in school records. In that initial effort approximately 2,000 pupils were identified, representing 2.8 percent of the students enrolled in that school year.

Following the initial effort, "a more comprehensive study of the dropout problem in DISD was designed and conducted." The 1971-72 study utilized a more complex methodology tracking students enrolled in the 1971-72 school

year to 1972 fall enrollment listings. Using this approach the research was able to take into account students who dropped out of school (or at least failed to re-enroll and reflected no evidence of continuing their education in another school system) during the summer months, as well as pupils recorded as withdrawals during the school year involved. This methodology in turn yielded a total of approximately 4,300 pupils, and an overall high school dropout rate of 11.3 percent. Ethnic group breakdowns of that years dropouts reflected that 10.2 percent of these were Hispanic, 10.5 percent were Black, while 7.6 percent were White pupils.

According to the research department's review, the 1974 report used "a much more elaborate procedure". Using the district's pupil accounting data the staff compiled listings of students who withdrew, transfered or reentered school during the 1972-73 school year and compared these rosters with lists of students enrolled in the Fall of 1973. A refinement of the previous year's procedure involved identification and separation of students for whom some official withdrawal notice was available from those withdrawing for unexplained reasons. Official withdrawal lists were further culled by excluding students whose reasons for withdrawal "appeared to indicate that they had not in fact dropped out of school". (ie, transfers, chronic illness, early graduations). Combining students unofficially withdrawn with known dropouts, a total of 4,300 students were identified. Separate rates were calculated for students considered withdrawals, "dropouts" versus "no-shows", defined as students who had withdrawn during the summer

without official notice. The high school "dropout" rate was reported as 7.4 percent with ethnic breakdowns reflecting a rate of 14.5 percent for Hispanics, 6.99 percent for Whites and 6.6 percent for Blacks. The no show rate was 11.2 percent.

A refinement introduced in 1974-75 called for district high schools to furnish information relating to reasons for students withdrawal. Using methodology comparable to the 1973-74 study the 1974-75 analyses the district reported an overall school dropout rate of 5.6 percent (Hispanics 6.9 percent, Whites 5.3 percent and Blacks 4.9 percent). The no show rate exceeded 12 percent. These rates in turn contrasted to a 1973-74 overall dropout rate of 4.2 percent (Hispanics 5.9 percent, Whites 4.2 percent, and Blacks 1.6 percent).

Analyses of the 1974-75 withdrawal documentation revealed that the greatest number of withdrawals were found in the dropped for "other reasons" category, yielding little useful information for possible use in developing prevention on recovery strategies. District staff also noted some problems with the adequacy/accuracy of the data regarding the documentation of students reasons for withdrawal.

The 1975-76 dropout research continued use of the previous years' methodology, generate two rates or indices: a dropout index and withdrawal index. The withdrawal index was comparable to the 1974-75 dropout rate procedure. The dropout index however excluded withdrawal where reasons given included: "commitment to an institution", "poor

health", "expulsion", or "other". Using the revised procedure yielded an overall dropout rate of 3.1 percent, lower than preceding year's figures. The revised approach also yield significantly lower rates across all ethnic groups (White 3.8 percent, Black 2.5 percent and Hispanic 2.7 percent).

In 1976-77 the school district used essentially the same methodology, generating an overall dropout rate of 3.6 percent, and an overall withdrawal rate of 9.4 percent. Dropout rates by ethnicity were reported as White 3.9 percent, Black 1.97 percent and Hispanic 6.5 percent.

A major issue in the dropout studies conducted between 1970 and 1977 involved the exclusion of all pupils over 16 years of age, attributable to the fact that the State compulsory attendance law applied only to student below that age. A second issue involved the accuracy of withdrawal documents regarding students actual reasons for withdrawing from school, with accuracy varying from campus to campus.

A third problem related to the fact that some schools carried pupils on attendance rates long after a student had cease to attend classes. A desire to refine the dropout identification process led to the development of still another index -- termed a nonattender, as contrasted to dropout index. Students found to have excessive absences, and a grade of F in all subjects were re-defined as nonattenders, with these counts added to the subset of withdrawals considered to fit the dropout category. The

nonattendance indices are summarized in the table below, (which was provided in the district's summary document).

Table 3**
Nonattendance Indices for 1978-79 through 1982-83

Year	Source	Nonattendance Index Overall	White	Black	Hisp.
78-79	Marcus & Julian, 1979	12.2	8.4	10.5	14.3
79-80	Marcus & Julian, 1980	11.8	7.9	8.1	12.7
80-81	Marcus & Julian, 1981	9.6	8.0	7.6	11.7
81-82*	Marcus, 1982	5.5	3.8	6.2	6.9
82-83	Whitemore, 1983	8.4	7.3	7.3	14.0

*In 1981-82 a change in district policy motivated an increase in the number of days absent required for a student to be classified as a nonattender. This change proved unfortunate for it resulted in an inconsistent decline in the numbers of students so classified. In 1982-83, DISD reverted to the criterion that had been employed previously.

**Source: Investigations of the Incidence of Dropouts in DISD: A summary of past efforts and considerations for future efforts.

Continuing problems with the accuracy of withdrawal documents led the district staff to propose that though [they] had refined [their] procedure for collecting and analyzing dropout related data, they had not "attained what [they] consider to be reliable measures of the district dropout rate, "due in a large part to poor recordkeeping procedures". Given the lack of reliable and accurate data the district discontinued further analyses of dropout data, up to the year that State-mandated Annual Performance report requirements requested such information.

Austin ISD Dropout Research

Like its two major urban system counterparts, the Austin ISD had conducted extensive research on the dropout issue, and generated a series of research reports addressing the topic. In one of the move comprehensive studies reviewed, the Austin research staff report findings of a longitudinal study which tracked selected students enrolled in the district in 1978-79 through the 1982-83 school year. The cohort of students selected were all AISD students enrolled in 1978-79 for all or part of the school year and who were at least 14, but not 15 years of age on September 1, 1978. According to the report, "enrollment data for each year until the fall of 1983 were collected from the student masterfile. Test scores, special education status, and other variables were collected from other files. Students who entered the school district in subsequent years were not added to the file." Tracking procedures included assigning of school leaver codes with subsequent updating for students re-entering district campuses. The purposes of the research was to determine (a) what longitudinal tracking would reveal regarding number of students who j(1) dropped out (2) graduated (3) dropped out and re-entered school and (4) dropped out in summer as compared to those (b) to what extent could available information be used to identify students likely to dropout and (c) what was the impact of desegregation related activities on the dropout rate for students included in the study.

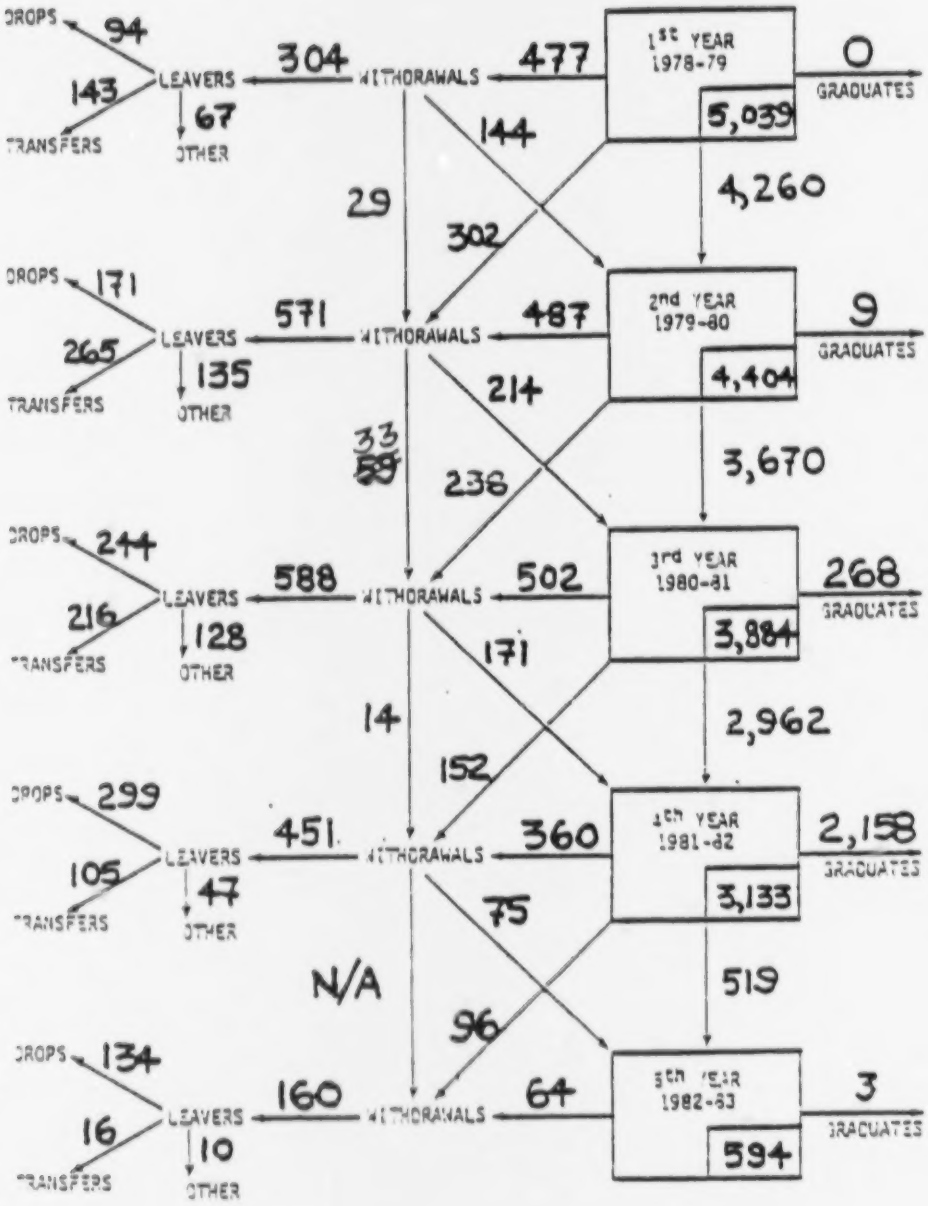
Once the data were coded and compiled, they were tabulated and analyzed. Major variables included sex,

race/ethnicity, grade level, disciplinary action frequency, and grades/academic achievement. Results of each of these analyses are described below. A significant methodological consideration noted in the report was that in calculating the dropout rate, students whose dropout status was designated as transfer, other, or unknown were removed from the calculation, because their true dropout status was unknown.

In a complex, yet comprehensive assessment of student status, the research staff formulated a matrix reflecting the patterns of movement available to students as they moved into, through and/or out of the school district. Referred to as a "Leaver lattice" the tracking map reflects a step-wise progression of the status of the 5,039 pupils tracked in the study. For each year analyzed, the research tracks individual pupils enrolled in the second year, the number who officially withdraw, the students determined to have left during the summer (ie. not re-enrolling the subsequent year), the number of pupils who withdraw and then re-enter in a subsequent school year.

For students identified as withdrawals, the research tracked their status to establish whether they had re-enrolled in a subsequent school year or remained as withdrawals. For withdrawals, the district established whether these students were classified as formal "dropouts", transfers, or "other". A final subgroup included those students determined to have graduated during each year. The enrollment path matrix, and the numbers yielded in the district study are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1



ENROLLMENT PATH FOR 1978-79 14-YEAR OLDS.

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STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Graduated	2,438	48%
Transferred	745	15%
Still Enrolled	527	10%
Dropped Out	942	19%
Other Leavers	387	8%
TOTAL	5,039	100%

Figure H-3. STATUS OF STUDENTS INCLUDED IN STUDY AS OF FALL 1982.

		SCHOOL YEAR DROPOUTS		SUMMER DROPOUTS		TOTAL	
YEAR	AGE	N	%	N	%	N	%
78-79	14-15	94	10%	54	6%	148	16%
79-80	15-16	117	12%	47	5%	164	17%
80-81	16-17	197	21%	66	7%	263	28%
81-82	17-18	233	25%	75	8%	308	33%
82-83	18-19	59	6%	-	-	59	6%
TOTAL	14-19	700	74%	242	26%	942	100%

Figure H-4. NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS BY TIME OF DROPPING OUT. "School year" students attended school for part of the school year. "Summer" dropouts completed the school year but did not return.

Analysis of the cumulative data reveals that of the 5,039 pupils, 2,438 graduated (48 percent), 15 percent transferred, 10 percent were enrolled for a fifth year 19 percent dropped out, while the remaining 8 percent represented other leavers. Further analysis of the dropout data indicated that 74 percent dropped out during the school year, with the greatest proportion of these pupils being 16 to 18 years of age. Summer dropouts accounted for 24 percent of the dropout students. Review of age level data indicates that dropouts were most represented in the 16-18 category, as these students represented 61 percent of dropouts identified. While the majority of dropout students were over the compulsory school age, the report takes note of the fact that 16 percent of pupils between 14 and 15, and 17 percent of pupils between 15 and 16 years of age were reported as dropouts, accounting for one third of all student dropouts identified in the study.

Dropouts by race and ethnicity reflected some variance across groups. Hispanics were found to represent 35 percent of dropouts identified, Blacks 28 percent, Anglo and others 18 percent. Twenty-five percent (25 percent) of the 1,916 student tracked in the study dropped out, compared to 23 percent of female students included in the study.

Analyses of student dropout data (in 1978-79), revealed that 45 percent of male dropouts were below grade level, 19 percent were on level, while 5 percent were above level. Among females 55 percent were below grade level 18 percent were on grade level, and 6 percent were above.

Overall, 49 percent of all dropouts were below grade level for their group.

Summary data on students behind one grade or more revealed that 47 percent of Black male and 33 percent of Black females were behind one grade or more; figures for Hispanic were 43 percent for Hispanic males, and 33 percent for Hispanic females, as compared to 22 percent for Anglo males and 12 percent for Anglo females. Overall rates by ethnic group further revealed that 40 percent of Black dropouts were one or more years below grade level, while 37 percent of Hispanics and 17 percent of Anglos and others reflected similar grade level lags.

As pointed out earlier in the study, one of the purposes of the research effort was to enable the district to develop a predictive model for dropouts based on data collected in the tracking process. Having identified actual dropouts, data on five variables considered to be significant factors related to student dropouts was compiled and the data were subjected to a discriminant analyses. using a stepwise discriminant analysis procedure, with the order of entry determined by the variable giving the greatest Mahalanobis distance between the two groups. The discriminant function derived from the analysis was then used to classify all students as either dropouts on non-dropouts. Using the predictive model, approximately 75 percent of the dropout students included in the study could be correctly identified. Based on their findings the researchers propose that two major implications are evident. One is that students at risk of dropping out <u>can</u> be identified with

reasonable accuracy using information readily available in the districts computer files. A second major findings was that, on the basis of minimal differences found among the major ethnic groups, Austin-based programs need not be culturally specific in their content. Specifically, the document proposes that "improvement in academic accomplishment as reflected in GIA and grade for age would appear to be the most important target for the dropout population.

A related purpose of the district's research effort was an to examine the impact of the desegregation plan on the dropout rates for students affected by this effort. Examining both short term and long term propensities for dropping out, the study results reflected distinctive patterns for each context. According to the report "in the short term minority students who were in impacted schools, whether bussed or not had a higher probability of dropping out than those not in impacted schools. For Hispanics, students bussed to impacted schools were more likely to dropout than those who attended the same impacted schools they would have attended without the court order." For Blacks, however, it made no difference whether they were bussed or not. For all three ethnic groups, females were more likely to drop out than males.

When long term trend data were examined, the direction of the impact of desegregation was the same as the short term for Blacks, i.e., Blacks assigned to impacted schools were more likely to drop out then those not affected, and being re-assigned made no additional difference.

For "other" students those not affected by the desegregation plan were less likely to drop out than those students who were in impacted schools and re-assigned. However, students who were reassigned were the least likely of the other students to leave school. One possible explanation offered is that reassigned other students went to schools which had historically placed fewer demands on pupils, so that those who might have dropped out functioned more effectively in the less demanding environment, and thus remaining enrolled.

For Hispanic pupils, being in an impacted school alone did not make a difference; however, those Hispanic pupils that were reassigned did have a greater dropout rate than those who were not affected or who had only attended impacted schools.

"Mother Got Tired of Taking Care of My Baby": A Study of Dropouts from DISD.

As a follow-up to the longitudinal study which sought to establish a dropout rate for Austin ISD by tracking a cohort of fourteen year old students over a 5 year reporting period dating to 1978-79, the district undertook a study of dropouts involving interviews with a sample of students who had been identified in the earlier study. After recapping the major findings gleaned from earlier district ORE reports, the results of 100 dropout interviews and summarized and discussed. Using a case study approach, composite descriptions based on interview responses are presented. A significant observation made in the report was that "there

were few simple cases where one or two factors contributed overwhelmingly to a student's decision to leave school;" ...[but rather] the mass of weight favoring dropping out accumulating] over many years."

According to the report, reasons for dropping out seem to fall into two classes: school-related reasons, and personal/economic reasons. The report notes " It is not surprising that a study of separation from school would find school-related reasons as the primary factors in dropping out." Often the dropouts were behind their peers in achievement, their grades were low, and they had earned few credits for their age. This lack of academic preparation and success was the most frequently mentioned reason for dropping out."

A second class of school-related reasons for dropping out involved attitudes toward school. According to the report many students reported disliking school and being bored with school. Despite the only 5 percent reported conflict with teachers and administrators as their primary reason for withdrawing; while 12 percent report discipline related problems as a secondary reason. A third school related reason, perhaps unique to AISD related to transfers imposed by desegregation requirements, with 10 percent of students listing this as a secondary factor.

Approximately 50 percent of the respondents attributed the decision to leave school to personal/economic reasons. These included health, pregnancy, desire/need to look full-time, and need to care for someone at their home. After

reviewing results of the interviews, the report proceeds to discussion of possible district responses including a program for improving students' basic skills and including components to help meet their economic needs, and finally by providing activities sufficiently valuable and engaging to compete with out of school interests/activities.

AISD's Dropout Rate: 1983-84 and 1984-85

In October 1985, the AISD Office of Research and Evaluation developed and presented updated dropout statistics using modified methodology somewhat different from that in its 1983 study. According to the data, the district dropout rates for 1983-84 was 9.8 percent. Breakdowns by ethnicity reveal that the Black student dropout rate was 9.2 percent, Hispanics was highest at 13.7 percent, while Anglo/other students reflected an 8.5 percent dropout rate. Breakdowns by sex revealed that 10.6 percent of male students dropout, as contrasted to 9.1 percent of females.

Detailed data on the 1983-84 data revealed that 73 percent of students dropped out during the school year, while the remaining 27 percent failed to re-enroll after the summer term; a trend observed in earlier studies conducted by AISD.

Junior high school rates were computed for the first time in 1984-85. Preliminary data indicate that the overall dropout rate for this level is 3.8 percent with Hispanics reflecting a 5.8 percent, Blacks a 3.3 percent, and Anglos a 3.3 percent dropout rate. Equal percentages (3.8 percent)

of male and female students made up the Junior high school population identified.

Although district staff indicate that the impact of HB72 cannot be determined at this time, the five absence limit and "no pass no play" provisions are expected to affect the school year dropout rate more than the summer dropout index.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Review of research related to dropouts indicate that very few Texas school systems have conducted studies in this area. A Texas Education survey mailed to all 1,080 school systems yielded a total of 48 school systems (3.5 percent) which indicated having done some type of research on the issue. Follow-up of these in turn revealed that 12 had no formal report of their research, i.e., they lack written descriptions of methodology utilized, sampling procedures, statistical treatments or other descriptions of the research efforts undertaken. Attempts to acquire research reports from the remainder yielded responses from school systems. These included reports from 4 of the states' eight largest school districts, 2 from central city system, and 3 reports from states categorized as "small" or "rural" in the States district system.

Review of the district research efforts revealed that three of the state's major urban school systems had (Austin, Dallas, and Houston) conducted ongoing studies of district dropouts, generating a series of reports addressing the

issue. Among the remaining districts dropout research was in its initial year with follow-up studies anticipated, while in a few cases the dropout research was a one-time effort to be used to formulate school district intervention/response strategies.

Dropout studies tended to cluster around two major approaches. The first involved the development of dropout estimates based on identification of a district's dropouts using records' analysis procedures and subsequent calculation of a rate, represented as a ratio of dropouts to various subtotals of the district enrollment. The second major type of studies involved follow-up contacts of presumed dropouts designed primarily to confirm their educational status, job status, and to identify needs which schools might help address, and in some studies to attempt to identify factors associated with students decision to withdrew from school.

Review of the research reports revealed a broad range of capability and sophistication, representative of the diversity found among the states school districts. Research designs/methods were on numerous as the number of districts submitting, information, with significant variances in the definitions used to identify dropouts, the procedures used to calculate dropout percentages, and the perceived adequacy of the data bases used to generate the statistics. Meta-analyses of these data were precluded by major incompatibilities in research designs, formats, and the manner in which data were tabulated and presented.

Research reports reviewed and summarized reflect that dropout rates vary according to the procedure used, with costs and resource requirements for comprehensive tracking of pupils records over a multiple year span significantly influencing the approaches utilized. Dependence on adequate and accurate recordkeeping was identified as an essential first step with inconsistency or lack of conscientious documentation of student status sometimes frustrating the research effort. Access to automated data processing and related resources also was noted as important in the level and sophistication of dropout research undertaken.

Although the prevailing number of studies examined one year spans, (i.e., tracking pupils from one school year to the next) sometimes repeating the same study over a span of years, most tended to refine identification procedures thus yielding improved annual estimates, but limiting the extent of longitudinal analyses that might be conducted.

Only one of the research documents reflected a longitudinal study approach, i.e., wherein a group of pupils was identified and carefully tracked over a multiple year period, yielding not only an estimated dropout rate, but numbers of transfers, graduates and other data which explained the 42 percent attrition reflected between the district's 9th and 12th grade enrollments.

Student dropout tracking research analyze reinforced earlier conclusions regarding the mobility of the dropout population, the difficulty of contacting the students, problems associated with pinpointing specific factors

contributing to their decisions to leave school, their interest in acquiring some additional education, and their general reluctance to return to the school setting in the absence of any changes in extent school conditions which created their original dropout status.

Review of the research reports indicate that standardization of student withdrawal procedures, requirements that receiving districts notify the sending of students subsequent enrollment (at all levels of the grade continuum), and an emphasis on maintenance of reliable and accurate student recordkeeping procedures are essential to an adequate assessment of a district's dropout rate. In addition to standard student recordkeeping procedures regarding withdrawals, consistency in the tabulation procedures used to calculate dropout rates needs to be addressed.

While it may appear logical to compute a dropout percentage on the basis of a school systems total enrollment, Morrows, points out that such inflation of the denominator will artificially deflate the dropout rate, particularly since the propensity to drop out in grades K-5 and minimal. Conversely, utilization of Junior and high school level data, either as subgroups or collectively, yields a more realistic estimate of school holding power for those students most at risk of dropping out.

While annual dropout rate(s) provide one useful index of a district's holding power by providing data for a specific time period, longitudinal approaches which track the status of students over a multiple year period yield clearer

indicators of attrition rates for individual groups of pupils.

Although some standardization of student identification and calculation procedures were developed in the Annual Performance Report requirements relating to dropout reporting, greater standardization in district recordkeeping, more emphasis on maintaining accurate and reliable records, and some process for cross-checking/validating these figures needs to be developed. If these data are to be used to calculate state-wide rates, districts should be advised of the need for standardization of withdrawal and relating tracking-validation procedures, and accuracy in the data compiled and reported. Standardization of reporting procedures, procedures to insure data validity/reliability, and means for cross validating district reports considered critical if the state is to develop reliable indices of the existing public school dropout rate.

These concerns are imperative if future data collection and subsequent analyses are to be conducted. Research endeavors are futile if the data provided are biased and/or incorrect.

If the identification and documentation of dropouts are standardized and rigorously followed at the local level, then a true assessment of the dropout problem in Texas is possible.

Dropout Definitions and Calculation of Dropouts

Research on the development of dropout indices repeatedly noted that determination of the definition to be used to identify what constitutes a dropout is the initial key element in the research process. Review of district research revealed that in Texas lack of standard definitions, created by the absenc of a statewide standard has resulted in the formulation of diverse definitions which effectively precluded collapsing of individual district data across school systems and in some cases, even prevent longitudinal analyses of single school systems dropout studies. According to Morrow (1986), a range of definitions of dropouts have been used to identify a range of early school leavers. These included: (1) pushouts - students removed from the school setting as undesirables; (2)disaffiliated - students no longer wishing to be affiliated with school; (3) educational mortalities - students failing to complete a program; (4) capable dropouts - family socialization disagrees with school demand; (5) stopouts - students dropping and re-enrolling.

Reviewing the state agency and textbook definitions Morrow suggests that three criteria for defining a dropout emerge. These include (1) Is the student currently enrolled; (2) If not, has the enrollment been formally transferred to another legitimate institution, and (3) Has the student earned a high school diploma or its equivalent?

After reviewing the implications associated with each of the various issues raised, Morrow proposes the following definition:

A dropout is any student previously enrolled who is no longer actively enrolled, as indicated by 15 days of consecutive unexcused absences, who has not satisfied local standards for graduation, and for whom no formal request has been received signifying enrollment in another

State licensed educational institution. This definition is sensitive to such issues as summer versus school term withdrawals, non-attenders often carried on membership rolls, verified transfer procedures, and completion of graduation requirements. The researchers support the use of such a definition a State Standard.

Calculation of a Dropout Rate

To a great extent, dropout rate variations can be attributed to variances in the factors which are incorporated into the computation formula to be utilized. Although the mathematical process can be simplified to provide for the division of (a) the number of students to be defined as dropouts (according to the definition used), by the (b) the pool of students from which the dropout originated [displayed mathematically as a/b = r where r equals the rate] manipulation of either the numerator or denominator produces great variance in the outcome figure generated.

According to Morrow, among the critical manipulable factors involved in the calculation of dropout rate are:

(1) the time frame during which the number of students is counted,

(2) the range of grade levels included in the dropout rate calculation, and

(3) the student accounting procedures used by the district (i.e., average attendance versus average membership).

According to research reviewed, two major time frames are used to generate dropout rates. These include (1) annual rates and (2) cohort rates.

Annual rates usually involve analysis of dropout rates for a single year. In this type of calculation the numerator involves determination of a district dropout rate for all (or specific) grade levels(s) and dividing the total by the total population for those grade levels (or in the case of a specific grade all students at the grade level analyzed). A numeric representation of this is provided as Figure 2, below.

Figure 2

Enrollment	Dropouts	Range of Grades	Calculation of Dropout Rate
9th 80	10	9-12	a = .40
10th 50	20		b = 200

11th	40	10		r = 50 / 200 or 25%
12th	30	10	9th only	a = 10
Total	200	50		b = 80
				4 = 10 / 80 or 12.5%

Where:

a = dropouts

b = the total number of students for grades(s) involved

Calculation of a cohort rate involves tracking of a specific group or class of students over a multiple year period and cumulatively totaling the dropouts for the group being analyzed. Figure 3 provides an example of this calcuation procedure.

Figure 3

Enrollment	Dropouts from this class	Calculation of Dropout rate
9th grade 80	freshmen year 20	a = 40
	sophmore year 10	b = 80
	junior year 5	r = 40 / 80 or 50
	senior year 40	

Although the time frame analyzed is an important consideration, in dropout rate calculations it is essentially reflective of two views of the issue, one a vertical tabulation across grades for specific years, while the other provides a longitudinal measure of district holding power for a particular group of students.

According to Morrow and related research efforts, the cohort dropout rate produces a more accurate picture of the success and failure rate of a district's school program.

While research reflects that the timeframe analyzed can alter dropout statistics generated within the same district, a more manipulable factor in calculating dropout rates relates to the grade spans included in the dropout calculation. Figure 4 presents an example of the varying rates generated by modifying the time span included in the calculation formula.

As a general rule, the greater the span of grades incorporated, the lower the resulting dropout rate generated. Figure 4 illustrates the effects of using various grade spans for calculating dropout rates.

Figure 4
Effects of using varying Grade Spans and
Dropout Rates Produced

Enrollment grades K-12 = 6000 Total dropouts = 4000
Enrollment grades 7-12 = 3000

Enrollment grades 8-12 = 2500

Enrollment grades 9-12 = 2000

$$\text{K - 12 rate} = \frac{400}{6000} = 6.7\%$$

$$\text{7 - 12 rate} = \frac{400}{3000} = 13.4\%$$

$$\text{8 - 12 rate} = \frac{400}{2500} = 16\%$$

$$\text{9 - 12 rate} = \frac{400}{2000} = 20\%$$

Analyzing the effects of using differing grade ranges, Morrow proposes that use of a broad range of grades in calculating the rate can be misleading in that the incidence of dropping out is often primarily limited to a portion of the population pool included in the calculation. While inclusion of grades K-12 implies that there is a comparable propensity for dropping out at all grade levels included, the majority of research reviewed indicates that the great proportion of the dropout pool is distributed between grades 7 to 12, with highest concentrations at grades 9 to 12.

The third major manipulable factor, the student accounting issue relates to the fact that use of ADM, which by definition will produce a lower rate than average daily attendance (which consitutes a subset of membership) can

also effect the outcome of the calculation of dropout statistics.

Given the apparent variance in rates which can be produced by manipulating any combination of the option noted, determination of a state rate will require the standardization of not only the dropout definition used, but also (1) a clear delineation of the specific elements to be incorporated into the calculation formula, or preferably, requirements that districts produce a variety of dropout endices using variations in the time frame, grade span and student accounting procedure with each clearly reflecting the variables incorporated in the calculation process.

Attachments

Attachment 1

Annual Performance Report - Campus Information

(3.4) DROPOUTS

Information shall be provided by CAMPUS.

It is recommended that the information be presented with the total number of dropouts and dropout rate as the column headings.

Definitions needed are listed below.

DROPOUT: A dropout is a person who:
- . is currently aged 7-21
- . is not currently enrolled in grades K-12
- . has not graduated from grade 12 or obtained a GED
- . has withdrawn from school for improper reasons as defined below
- . has not transferred to another educational institution or gained early admission to a college or university

PROPER REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL: The following are proper reasons for a person aged 7-21 to withdraw from school:
- . Placed in a correctional institution
- . Death
- . Early college enrollment
- . Physical/mental disability, illness (documented)
- . Pregnancy/delivery (up to one academic year, after which the student should be considered as an improper withdrawal)
- . Transfer to another public/nonpublic school

IMPROPER REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL: The following are improper reasons for a person aged 7-21 to withdraw from school:
- . Poor or non-attendance
- . Dislike of school
- . Enlisted in military service
- . Economic reasons
- . Obtained employment or work permit
- . Expulsion or suspension
- . Language or communication problems
- . Left to enroll in GED program
- . Low or failing grades
- . Marriage
- . Moved/whereabouts unknown
- . Over age 18
- . Parental request/needed at home
- . Quit school
- . Substance abuse (alcohol/drugs)
- . Summer withdrawal
- . Transfer to vocational/technical proprietary school
- . Transfer problems
- . Unknown

DROPOUT RATE: A dropout rate is the percentage that total dropouts, as defined above, comprise of the eligible school-aged population. Dropout rates can be calculated annually or longitudionally.

For purposes of calculating an annual dropout rate for each campus, the following formula is recommended:

Calculation of Annual Dropout Rate

TOTAL 1984-85 STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR 1985-86

	A. Total campus membership in beginning of year - 9/1/84		_____
Plus:			
	B. Number transferring to campus during 1984-85	+	_____
Less:			
	C. Number transferred from campus or withdrawn for other proper reasons during 1984-85	-	_____
Equals:			
	D. Total base campus enrollment	=	_____
Less:			
	E. Number graduated, promoted, or obtaining certificate of completion	-	_____
Equals:			
	F. Total 1984-85 students eligible for 1985-86*	=	_____

TOTAL 1984-85 STUDENTS IN CAMPUS FOR 1985-86

	G. Total campus membership in beginning of year - 9/1/85		_____
Less:			
	H. New students to campus in 1985-86	-	_____
Equals:			
	I. Total 1984-85 students in campus for 1985-86	=	_____

TOTAL 1984-85 DROPOUTS

	J. Total 1984-85 students eligible for 1985-86		_____
Less:			
	K. Total 1984-85 students in campus for 1985-86	-	_____
Equals:			
	L. Total 1984-85 total dropouts/students not returning to campus in 1985-86	=	_____

DROPOUT RATE

	M. Dropout Rate The percent that Total Dropouts (L) comprise of total 1984-85 base campus enrollment (D).	_____
	((L) / (D)) * 100 rounded to one decimal place	_____

A sample presentation follows. Note that only the dropout rate and the number of dropouts are reported (lines L and M above).

*Will include students withdrawing for improper reasons during the 1984-85 year.

Texas Dropout Study Project

Dropout Identification and Procedures Survey of Districts

Sponsors: Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA)
Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Contractor: Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)

District Name_____
District No _____

1. If a student leaves school before graduating from grade 12 for any of the following reasons, is he/she counted as a dropout in your district?

poor or non-attendance	Yes____ No____
dislike of school	Yes____ No____
enlisted in military service	Yes____ No____
economic reasons	Yes____ No____
obtained employment or work permit	Yes____ No____
expulsion or suspension	Yes____ No____
language or communication problems	Yes____ No____
left to enroll in GED program	Yes____ No____
low or failing grades	Yes____ No____
marriage	Yes____ No____
moved/whereabouts unknown	Yes____ No____
over age 18	Yes____ No____
parental request/needed at home	Yes____ No____
quit school	Yes____ No____
substance abuse	Yes____ No____
summer withdrawal	Yes____ No____
transfer to vocational/technical proprietary school	Yes____ No____
transfer problems	Yes____ No____
pregnancy/delivery	Yes____ No____
placed in a correctional institution	Yes____ No____
death	Yes____ No____
early college enrollment	Yes____ No____
physical/mental disability, illness	Yes____ No____
transfer to another public or non-public school	Yes____ No____
other (please specify)	_____

2. If a student meets other dropout criteria but is no longer of compulsory school age, do you include him/her in the dropout counts? Yes____ No____

3. A student is listed as having transferred to another educational institution if:

   A. a transcript request is made by the receiving school Yes____ No____
   B. the student or parent list "transfer" as a reason for withdrawal Yes____ No____

4. In determining the dropout rate for your district, do you use the following method(s)?

   A. Cohort or "cumulative" (e.g.,follow a freshman class for 4 years) Yes____ No____
   B. Yearly Yes____ No____
   C. Other (please specify) _____

5. What grade levels do you include in determining your district dropout rate? _____

6. Which of the following do you use as a baseline figure in computing your dropout rate?

   A. Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Yes____ No____
   B. Average Daily Membership (ADM) Yes____ No____
   C. Original Entries Yes____ No____
   D. Other (please specify) _____

7. Do you use a formula for calculating the percentage of students in your district who drop out of school? Yes____ No____

   If yes, please specify your formula _____

8. Who has the authority to withdraw the student?

   A. Student over 16 Yes____ No____
   B. Student over 18 Yes____ No____
   C. Student of any age Yes____ No____
   D. Parent/Relative Yes____ No____
   E. School Official Yes____ No____
   F. Other (please specify) _____

9. Who initiates the withdrawal of a student?

   A. Attendance Clerk/Secretary Yes____ No____
   B. Principal Yes____ No____
   C. Other (please specify) _____

10. Is the dropout information sent to the central administration? Yes____ No____

    If Yes, When are the records sent? _____

11. When is the dropout information updated at the campus level?

A. Fall	Yes____ No____
B. Spring	Yes____ No____
C. Year-round	Yes____ No____
D. Other (please specify)	_____

12. When is the dropout information updated at the central administration level?

A. Fall	Yes____ No____
B. Spring	Yes____ No____
C. Year-round	Yes____ No____
D. Other (please specify)	_____
E. Not applicable (Kept only at campus level)	Yes____ No____

Respondent Name _____

Respondent Title _____

Date _____

Signature _____

Please return to: Intercultural Development
Research Association
5835 Callaghan, Suite 350
San Antonio, TX 78228

Attachment 3

CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY OF DROPOUTS
Texas Dropout Study

District Formulas Used For Calculating Dropout Rates As Reported

In The Dropout Identification and Procedures Survey

1. Divide the Number of Dropouts by the Total Enrollment (n=4).
2. Original Entries - Dropouts + Re-Entries Divided by the Original Entries (n=1).
3. Divide the Total Number of Dropouts by the Average Daily Membership (n=6).
4. Use the TEA Formula (n=6).
5. 1.00-12 Grade Divided by 8 Grade Multiplied by 100 (n=1).
6. Original Entries - Number of Record Requests (n=1).
7. Simple Percentage (n=1).
8. Divide the Number of Dropouts by the Number of Students (n=1).
9. Divide the Percentage of Dropouts by the Percentage of ADA (n=1).
10. Divide the Dropouts by the Original Entries (n=3).
11. Divide the Dropouts by the 6 Week Enrollment (n=1).

Of the 26 districts which provided formulas, 11 different formulas are being used.

Attachment 4
Data Tables District Dropout
Identification and Procedures Survey

Improper Reasons For Dropping Out As Defined
By The Texas Education Agency

District Responses (n=78)

Table 1

Poor or Non-Attendance

	N	%
No	8	10.3
Yes	68	87.2
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Table 2

Dislike Of School

	N	%
No	8	10.3
Yes	67	85.9
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Table 3

Enlisted_In_Military_Service

	N	%
No	18	23.1
Yes	58	74.4
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Table 4

Economic_Reasons

	n	%
No	6	7.7
Yes	70	89.7
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Table 5

Employment_Or_Work_Permit

	N	%
No	9	11.5
Yes	67	85.9
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Table 6

Expulsion_Or_Suspension

	N	%
No	25	32.1
Yes	51	65.4
N°A	1	1.3
Missing	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

Tables 7

Communication_Problems

	N	%
No	22	28.2
Yes	52	66.7
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Tables 8

Left_To_Enroll_In_GED_Program

	N	%
No	11	14.1
Yes	62	79.5
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	4	5.1
Total	78	100.0

Table 9

Low_Or_Failing_Grades

	N	%
No	9	11.5
Yes	66	84.6
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 10

Married

	N	%
No	7	9
Yes	68	87.2
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 11

Moved Or Whereabouts Unknown

	N	%
No	24	30.8
Yes	51	65.4
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 12

Over Age 18

	N	%
No	19	24.4
Yes	55	70.5
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Table 13

Parental Request Needed At Home

	N	%
No	10	12.8
Yes	65	83.3
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 14

Quit School

	N	%
No	4	5.1
Yes	70	89.7
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Table 15

Substance_Abuse

	N	%
No	13	16.7
Yes	59	75.6
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	5	6.4
Total	78	100.0

Table 16

Summer_Withdrawl

	N	%
No	31	39.7
Yes	42	53.8
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	4	5.1
Total	78	100.0

Table 17

Transfer_To_Voc/Tech_Proprietary_School

	N	%
No	48	61.5
Yes	27	34.6
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 18

Transfer_Problems

Table

	N	%
No	40	51.3
Yes	34	43.6
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Proper Reasons for Dropping Out As Defined
By The Texas Education Agency

District Responses (N=78)

Table 19

Early College Enrollment

	N	%
Yes	67	85.9
No	7	9
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Table 20

Physical Mental Disability

	N	%
No	53	67.9
Yes	22	28.2
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 21

Transfer To Public Or Non-Public School

	N	%
Yes	69	88.5
No	6	7.7
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 22

Pregnancy/Delivery

	N	%
Yes	23	29.5
No	51	65.4
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	3	3.8
Total	78	100.0

Table 23

Placed_In_Correactional_Institution

	N	%
Yes	34	43.6
No	41	52.6
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Table 24

Death

	N	%
Yes	57	73.1
No	18	23.1
N/A	1	1.3
Missing	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Attachment 5

District Name _____

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
Division of Research
Texas School Dropout Project

County-District No _____

District Dropout Survey

Authority for Data Collection: TEC, Section 11.205 (House Bill 72)
Planned Use of Data: To provide assistance to agencies under contract to study the status of dropouts in Texas and to prepare a report for the State Board of Education and the legislature on the current status of research and programmatic efforts in this area.
Instructions: Complete the survey by responding to each question and attaching the information requested as well as any other information which may be useful to this study. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Wess Robinson or Dolores M. Valadez at the Texas Education Agency (512) 463-9704.

Survey Questions	Check Appropriately
I. Does your district currently have a system or process for identifying students who have dropped out of school?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please attach a paragraph describing the system or process used (include the definition used by the district for identifying dropouts).	
II. Does your district have any system or process for identifying potential dropouts?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please attach a description of the system or process used for identifying potential dropouts?	
III. Has your district conducted any research studies in the area of dropouts?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please enclose any available reports.	
IV. Does your district currently collect information regarding the reasons why students leave school?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, answer by checking all that apply:	
(a) Who provides the information on reasons for leaving school?	
___ the student	
___ the teacher	
___ the counselor	
___ other (please specify) _____	
(b) Is the information:	
___ maintained at the campus level	
___ forwarded to the central administration	
V. Does your district currently gather demographic information (e.g., age, sex, race, grade level) on dropouts?	☐ Yes ☐ No
VI. Does your district currently operate dropout prevention program(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please enclose any available reports on those programs.	

RI-004

Attachment 6

Texas Dropout Study Project
Research Reports Received and
Reviewed by Type

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TYPE OF DROPOUT RESEARCH CONDUCTED	DATE(s) OF RESEARCH REPORTS
Austin	Calculation of Annual Dropout Rate	1983, 1985
	Longitudinal Research on student attrition rates and characteristics of dropout youth; development of predictive model	1983
	Tracking and follow-up interviews of dropout students	1984
Corpus Christi*	Tracking and follow-up interviews of dropout students; calculation of projected dropout rates	1986
Dallas	Calculation of annual dropout rates, and analysis of withdrawal records data	1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983
Houston	Calculation of annual dropout rates, analysis of withdrawal records data.	1984, 1985
	Issues in defining and enumerating dropouts	1985
	Demographic and academic characteristics of dropouts	1985
	Dropout intervention strategies	1985
	Summer Disappearances; effect of inclusion of dropout rates	1985
	Tracking telephone interviews of dropouts	1986
Ysleta	Tracking and telephone interviews of dropouts	1985

*conducted for private industry council/JTPA; included all districts in Nueces County.

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TYPE OF DROPOUT RESEARCH CONDUCTED	DATE(s) OF RESEARCH REPORTS
Brownsville	Calculation of annual dropout rate, analysis of withdrawal data	1986
Santa Gertrudis	Longitudinal study of student attrition	1985, 1986
McAllen	Comparative analysis of student dropouts and non-dropouts including analysis of student demographics, academics, discipline; and parent and school personnel perspectives on dropout related issues	1986
Tyler	Calculation of Annual Dropout rates; comparisons of effects of using alternative methodologies. Analysis of withdrawal records data.	1985

Attachment 7

IDRA
Library Reference File: H.S. Dropouts

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